

Remarks

Claims 1-21 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Frost in view of Baxter, Jr. Claims 3-5, 7-9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19 and 20 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 21 is allowed. By this Amendment, claims 1, 10, 12, 14, 18 and 19 have been amended.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 2, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Frost in view of Baxter, Jr. In the December 14, 2005 Office Action, the Examiner states in part, “Frost...discloses...first (82), second (84) and third (86) input clutches...”. (page 3 of Office Action dated 12/14/05) (emphasis added). The Examiner further states, “the input clutches are not defined in the claim as being connected to an input shaft or having some type of function (i.e. input to what? Or input between what?)”.

As suggested by the Examiner, Applicants' have amended claims 1 and 14 to clarify that “first, second and third input clutches are connected to an input shaft.” Claims 10, 12, 18 and 19 have been amended to further clarify that first, second and third clutches are input clutches.

The U.S.P.T.O. has issued 682 patents using the term “input clutch” in the specification, of which 182 employ the term in the claims. As requested by the Examiner, U.S. Patent No. 7,004,881; U.S. Patent No. 6,799,108; and U.S. Patent No. 6,766,705 are samples illustrating the common use of the “input clutch” limitation in claim language. “Input clutch” is a commonly used term of art in the powertrain engineering field which refers to a clutch which transfers input torque into a transmission or transfer case when engaged. The input clutch is attached to an input shaft, usually in a direct manner, but which may also transfer ratioed torque indirectly from the input gear set in a manner to allow input torque from an input shaft into the transfer case or transmission.

Referring again to Frost, clutches 84 and 86 are reaction clutches (i.e., brakes) which are grounded to the housing 60. Reaction clutches (or brakes) cannot be considered "input clutches" because they do not transfer torque from an input, but rather provide reaction forces. By contrast, as recited in the present application, "...the first input clutch 30 selectively connects the sun gear 22 with the input 14, the second input clutch selectively connects the carrier 24 with the input 14, and the third input clutch 34 selectively connects the ring gear 26 with the input 14." *Specification, paragraph 25, lines 3-6.*

Further, the Examiner states "the connection between the chains and the planetary members in the claim isn't defined as a "direct" or "continuous" connection." (Office Action dated 12/14/05, page 2). Accordingly, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 14 by adding the term "continuously" between "transfer chains" and "connected" for further clarification. In light of the forgoing discussion, claims 1 and 14 are in condition for allowance. The respective dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons.

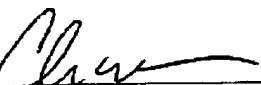
Allowable Claims

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowability of claim 21.

Respectfully submitted,

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